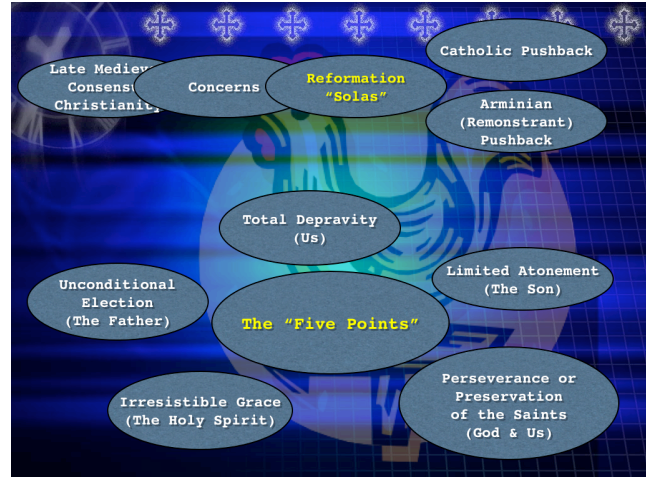


Week 11 • November 5, 2008

What's the "Calvinism" Kuyper's been advocating? (cont.)

Follow Up on the "L"-acious 3rd Petal of the TULIP

Calvin & the early Calvinists seemed to leave Particular Redemption or Definite Atonement or Limited Atonement (PR or DA or LA) a matter of hinted at implication — e.g., Calvin on 1 John 2:2 ("the whole world" here indicates Christ's benefits were "common to the whole church," not merely to John's immediate readers. The phrase "does not include the reprobate, but indicates those who would believe as well as those who were scattered throughout various regions of the world.")



As the Council of Dort considered Arminius' and the Remonstrants' assertions, they searched the Scriptures, and in the end found themselves compelled largely by a cluster of passages in Paul, and in the OT (e.g., Isa 53:10-12, "He will see his seed ... My Servant will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities ... He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors."), but esp. in John:

- All who come to Christ are all those who are given to Christ by the Father (6:37)
- Jesus the Good Shepherd definitely knows his sheep (10:14-15), rather than simply laying down the conditions for becoming one of his sheep
- Jesus explicitly prays for those whom the Father has given him, and not for "the world" (17:6,9)¹

In the end, for them it was a matter of trying to give a biblical (and, yes, logical) response to the Remonstrants:

- If we are truly dead, it can never be up to us.
- If the Father elects some but not everybody to salvation, it can't be that the Son, by contrast, intends to save anybody else. They simply couldn't see how the Father and the Son would be at odds — and, in fact, noted that the Son himself

¹ Raymond A. Blacketer, "Definite Atonement in Historical Perspective," in CE Hill & FA James (eds.), *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical & Practical Perspectives — Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole* (InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 321.

took solace in the fact that resistance to himself only proved God's choice, while not leaving him emotionally dead to the horror of the horrible choices his opponents were making (Luke 19:41-44, "And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes....'")

- If our relation begins with the Father's eternal love and design for redemption, is secured by Christ's sacrifice and present intercession, and is made effective by the Holy Spirit's regenerating and sanctifying work, we can't not make it through to the end.

Where's the Balance Point? — An Illustration

Some Bibliography

Steele, Thomas, Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented*, 2nd ed. (P&R, 2004 — 1st ed., 1963)

William Edgar, *Truth in All Its Glory: Commending the Reformed Faith* (P&R, 2004)

R.C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?: Understanding the Basics* (BakerBooks, 1997)

Other Basic Distinctives of Calvinistic (Reformed) Theology

The Whole of Scripture

Marcion: OT God of Wrath vs. NT God of Love

Luther: Law vs. Gospel

Dispensationalism:

- Sharp Boundaries between Israel and the Church
- Old & New Covenants Discontinuous
 - (Old Covenant = Law) vs. (New Covenant = Grace)
 - Law only convicts; Sermon on the Mount a gospel preparation
- OT Requirements Have to be Repeated in the NT
- Christ's Work (100%) + My Faith (0%) = Salvation – Works (Works do not necessarily follow upon salvation; "eternal security" rather than perseverance/preservation of the saints)

Calvinism:

- Fluid Relation between Israel and the Church — in the New Covenant era Gentiles are graciously "grafted in" to Israel's story
- Old & New Covenants in Continuity (WCF 7.6, "one covenant under various administrations")

- Law & Grace work hand in hand throughout God’s various administrations of his single plan for our redemption
- Old Covenant grounded in the indicative of the Exodus — New Covenant includes a “new commandment” [John 13:34; 14:21])
- Doctrine is Derived as much from OT as from NT — note well: with appropriate “epochal adjustments”
 - Calvinists think in terms of “from shadow to reality,” or “from lesser to greater”
 - e.g., what happens to love-thy-neighbor? what happens to the tithe? what happens to circumcision?
 - Implications for the way we think about children — an oversimplification, yet not without a point: we think of them as covenant community members who need to be helped to own for themselves and be built up in the faith, rather than resident alien pagans who need to be converted to the faith
- Christ’s Work (100%) + My Faith (0%) = Salvation + Works (Salvation by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone, WCF 11.2 — *“Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.”*)

A Big God

We try to balance	Transcendence	and	Immanence
	Eternal Decrees		Providential Care
	Eternality		Kindness
	Immutability		Mercy
	Sovereignty		Love
	Omnipotence		Patience
	Omnipresence		Presence

How well do we do that?

Compare and reflect on:

Westminster Shorter Catechism #4 — “What is God?”

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Heidelberg Catechism #1 — “What is your only comfort in life and in death?”

That I am not my own, but belong — body and soul, in life and in death — to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Regulated Worship & Real Presence

But first, a word about “the Protestant principle” in theology: The church does not assume the authority to teach anything except what is explicit in Scripture, or is necessarily inferred from Scripture.

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also. (WCF 20.2)

The Reformed “regulative principle” of worship: Because God is *transcendent* and because our hearts are, as Calvin says, “idol factories,” we need to worship not according to our wishes or imaginings or sense of propriety, but according to his Word. (WCF 21.1)

The Reformed sense of God’s “real presence” in Word and Sacrament: Because God is *immanent* he truly ministers to us in the preaching of the Word and truly feeds us at His Table.

Let us never be unmindful of the infinite goodness of our Savior who spreads out all his riches and blessing on this table, to impart them to us. For in giving himself to us, he makes a testimony to us that all that he has is ours. Therefore,

let us receive this sacrament as a pledge that the virtue of his death and passion is imputed to us for righteousness, even as though we had suffered them in our own persons. (Calvin's invitation to the Table, from "The Form of Church Prayers")

To Return to the Beginning: "Not a Square Inch" — Thinking Worldviewishly²

"Cultural Mandate" (Genesis 1:26-30)	"Great Commission" (Matthew 28:18-20)
"Common Grace" (Genesis 4:16-22; Matthew 5:45)	"Saving Grace" (Genesis 4:25-26; Philippians 1:29)
"General Revelation" (Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 14:16-17; 17:22-31; Titus 1:12)	"Special Revelation" (Psalm 19:7-14; Acts 14:15; 17:22-31; Titus 2:11-14)

A Combination of 3 Theological Commitments:

1. The goodness of creation (Genesis 1-3; Psalm 104; Colossians 1:15-17; Revelation 4)
2. The reality & permanence of the incarnation (John 1:1-18; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7; Colossians 1:18-19)
3. An eschatological consensus: Christ has begun the reign of God (with which we participate in this age), but Christ will only complete it in the age to come (i.e., we will not usher in its fullness by our own efforts)

² In general, besides Al Wolters & A. Kuyper, see Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Baker Book House, 1959, 1972)